

Steven L. Beshear
Governor

Leonard K. Peters, Secretary
Energy and Environment
Cabinet



Commonwealth of Kentucky
Public Service Commission
211 Sower Blvd.
P.O. Box 615
Frankfort, Kentucky 40602-0615
Telephone: (502) 564-3940
Fax: (502) 564-3460
psc.ky.gov

David L. Armstrong
Chairman

James W. Gardner
Vice Chairman

John W. Clay
Commissioner

NEWS RELEASE

Contact:
Andrew Melnykovych
502-564-3940, ext. 208
502-330-5981 (cell)

NEW PROTECTION FOR BURIED UTILITY LINES TAKES EFFECT *PSC sees stronger enforcement of call-before-you-dig requirement*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 14, 2008) – A state law that takes effect tomorrow can help reduce accidents or outages caused by someone digging into a buried utility line, the Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) says.

The new law expands enforcement of existing statutes that require underground utility lines to be located and marked prior to most excavation or demolition activity. Under the new law (KRS 367.4917), local governments may collect fines from excavators who fail to arrange for proper marking. In the past, all such fines went to the state.

“By giving local authorities an incentive to identify violators, this law should significantly increase enforcement of and compliance with the before-you-dig statute,” PSC Chairman David Armstrong said.

“Digging into a buried utility lines can disrupt service to large numbers of customers and, in the case of electric or gas lines, be extremely dangerous,” Armstrong said. “The PSC commends the General Assembly for sending a clear message about the importance of protecting underground utility facilities.”

The new provision was included in House Bill 649, which was enacted earlier this year. House Bill 649 also provides for the designation of Kentucky 811 as the state’s call-before-you-dig center.

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The Federal Communications Commission last year selected 811 as the national number to call to have underground utility lines marked prior to excavation. Previously, most states had used 10-digit toll-free numbers unique to each state.

Kentucky 811 (formerly Kentucky Underground Protection Inc.), is a consortium of utility companies, local governments and others with an interest in preventing damage to buried utility lines. The PSC works closely with Kentucky 811 and regularly investigates accidents or outages caused by someone digging into a buried utility line.

Kentucky law requires that, in most cases, anyone using mechanized equipment for excavation must first call and request the marking of any buried utility facilities.

All major utility companies in Kentucky, along with many smaller companies and municipal utilities, are members of Kentucky 811. There is no membership fee. Members pay a nominal fee for each request made to Kentucky 811 for marking of their lines.

But owners of underground lines are not required to provide information on their location to the 811 call center and may establish their own notification and location process.

Thus, in some areas it may be necessary to make more than one phone call to obtain information about underground lines.

“The PSC is gratified that membership in the one-call center has increased since the implementation of 811 as the before-you-dig number,” Armstrong said. “We strongly urge any owner of underground facilities that is not a member of Kentucky 811 to join immediately.”

More information on Kentucky 811 can be found at www.kentucky811.org.

The PSC is an independent agency attached for administrative purposes to the Energy and Environment Cabinet. It regulates more than 1,500 gas, water, sewer, electric and telecommunication utilities operating in the Commonwealth of Kentucky and has approximately 100 employees.

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